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Address to Amherst, Smith, Vassar
and Williams, Wash., D.C., Alumni Clubs
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Turner-Speed

Welcome to all of you from Amherst, Vassar, Smith and Williams. I look back on my two years of life at Amherst as one of the most important parts of my experience. Equally, I look on a portion of those periods at Vassar and Smith as important too. I can't say the same for Williams. I only went there once and had the misfortune of being the quarterback on the undefeated Amherst freshman football team that decided to throw a flat pass from his 20-yard line in the fourth quarter and lost the game on an interception.

You might be interested to know that two Amherst men, Judge William Webster and myself, had lunch today in my office here in the Central Intelligence Agency. A working lunch to coordinate the efforts of the FBI and the CIA. You might wonder how two liberally educated, clean-living Amherst men ended up as the number one G-man and the number one spy of our Country. Certainly neither of us anticipated this and I doubt that Amherst really thought they were educating people to come to these two professions. But, I am grateful that Amherst in my day, and I hope today, and I assume the same is true for Vassar, Williams and Smith, does not try to educate for a specific profession, but rather to make people well-rounded, adaptable, and liberally educated. I know that I am grateful to Amherst not for what they taught me in many, many fields of interests, but for engendering in me a desire to know those and other fields. I think this has helped Bill Webster and I to shift gears and shift careers in our 50's. We both enjoyed our first careers immensely. We both are excited by the careers we are now engaged in and find them most challenging.

Intelligence is a very exciting profession today. It is exciting because of the rate of change in the intelligence world. First, the rate of technological change is tremendous. We are very dependent for collecting intelligence information on technology, on satellites, on listening posts, on computers, on data processing. Even in the traditional field of human intelligence, the spy, we use more and more technical gadgets to help people maintain their cover, keep their identity fuzzy, permit them to communicate and exchange information in difficult circumstances.

The other half of the intelligence profession is also changing rapidly. What you collect you must analyze and draw conclusions and estimates from. Even in this field where the orientation is toward the social sciences, there is tremendous change. Even the techniques of analysis are changing. Today, we can manipulate

data in ways that let us extract unbelievable amounts of information. We do quantitative analysis in fields of social science and politics that you would not think were possible. The areas of our interest, as contrasted with maybe 30 years ago when we concentrated on the military and some politics, are changing too. Today we are deeply involved in countering international terrorism and the flow of international narcotics, and learning more about the world's food problem. Every year we do economic forecasting of all types. We predict the Soviet grain harvest; the industrial capacity of other nations; the health of world leaders. You are perhaps familiar with our forecasts of the world energy outlook and the Soviet oil capacity.

Today we don't concern ourselves as exclusively as heretofore with the Soviet Union, its satellites and China. Look at the pallet of problems on the President's desk tonight: Zimbabwe, Kampuchea, Afghanistan, Iran, Yemen, El Salvador. The intelligence professional today is challenged to keep abreast in many more areas and he must be familiar with many more academic disciplines.

Layered on top of this is the vast change in the environment in which we must work, primarily the domestic environment. In the past the intelligence activities of our country were largely isolated and secret. Since 1975, and the Church Committee, the Pike Committee, the Rockefeller Commission, with new means of oversight by the Congress, the White House, and the Intelligence Oversight Board, we are on the front page all the time. This may not be quite analogous to the caterpillar who comes out of a cocoon as a butterfly, but the result of this coming out from isolation is that today in this more open environment the intelligence profession is a very different profession, operating in a very different intelligence community than in the past.

It has had an impact on our internal operations and organization. It has impacted on how the intelligence community works with the rest of the Executive Branch, with the Legislative Branch, and also with the media and, through them with you, the public.

I would like to discuss this new environment and what it means to us because it represents a significant change for the country and is an issue of public concern. Today, the question before us is, should the CIA be unshackled? If it should be, what should the Congress do to check on us? What are the risks to your Constitutional rights?

Let me start with the impact of this new environment on us, here in the CIA, on our internal organization and operations. In the past, this big building next door had within it a number of sub-divisions of effort, directorates, that did the work of the Agency. They were meticulously compartmented from each other. This was a great plus because it helped protect secrets. Secrecy is absolutely fundamental for an intelligence organization. The question of course is, how much secret is necessary? How much secrecy is good? Obviously, there are risks when compartmentation is too tight. You run the risk that people will make decisions without all of the available facts. You run the risk that judgment on a given decision will be too narrowly focused. I suggest that if there have been mistakes made here in the past they have been greatly exaggerated. They may have been caused by being overly zealous or overly responsive, combined with too narrow a perspective because of this separation of effort, but never through maliciousness or callousness. When you have all the facts and the fellow sitting next to you making the decision doesn't have them all, it is only human nature to believe you have a better grasp on the problem than he.

Today, we are moving toward a more corporate organizational structure. I use corporate in the best sense -- becoming more consultative, more collegial, better organized for long run decision making. We are trying not to become bureaucratic and inflexible. In the CIA, all major decisions today are vetted through our key officers. Interestingly, and I will talk more of this later, one of those always is our General Counsel. You can't do much of anything without running into the law today. Another is our Legislative Counsel, because most of what we do has some interface on Capital Hill. And another is our Public Affairs Officer, because we simply must operate more openly than in the past.

This more corporate approach presents some risk to secrecy. To minimize that risk, while we expand the number of offices participating in decisionmaking, we try to minimize the number of individuals who participate and the degree of detail that an individual needs to carry out his role. For instance, I can make a decision on whether to initiate a risky spy operation without having to know the precise identity of the individual agent we are going to employ. So, we are trying today to find a happy medium between the dangers of isolated decisionmaking and the proliferation of information about sensitive activities to a point that they will no longer be secret. It is an important new dimension in our work.

So too, is the greater interaction with the Executive Branch. It is a fact that the CIA is less independent today. We are less like the small family business that we used to be and more one part of a corporate conglomerate. Our board of directors in the National Security Council, chaired by the President, provides a far greater degree of direction to our collection, analysis and covert actions - efforts to influence events in other countries - than has ever been the case before.

There are pluses and minuses to increased NSC direction. A big plus is that it ties us intimately to the policy makers and their deliberations. We can be more effective in providing data which they need if we know what their concerns really are and what they are working on. However, at the same time, we must always be scrupulously objective and not be influenced by the policy makers, i.e., we must be careful not to produce intelligence which just supports policy decisions that have already been made. We are as careful as we can be not to be influenced by what decision-makers may want to hear, but to give them sometimes the word about the emperor and his clothes. Unfortunately, the more effective we are, that is, the more useful our data is to the policy maker, and the more he listens to us, the more likely his decision and that data will coincide. Somebody will then conclude that the intelligence was skewed to fit the policy rather than the policy being built on the data. The better the system works, the more likely is the charge that intelligence is politicized.

Necessary secrecy is also hazarded by this greater interface with the rest of the Executive Branch. More people are involved in sensitive activities, and the probability of a leak of secret information is geometrically proportional to the number of people who know it. It doesn't make any difference who the people are. As you deal with the policy makers there is always the danger that some people with misplaced loyalties will try to influence policy by leaking secret information. When they feel very strongly about a policy, if they feel there is no other way to influence that policy, they may take their case to the public. The inhibitions of self-restraint and patriotism that prevailed in this country before Vietnam are not so prevalent in this no-holds-barred, post-Watergate environment. I can assure you it makes our job much more difficult.

A third change as a result of the new environment in which we must operate is the greater interplay we have with the Congress. In years past, there was very little known on Capital Hill about the CIA's activities. A few Senators, a few senior Representatives, were informed, but their general attitude was, don't tell me too much; I want to stay out of that. Today, that attitude is long gone. I spent three hours on the Hill yesterday arguing as to whether the Congress needed to know absolutely everything in every file in the building. This renewed interest is not all bad, however.

Dealing with the Congress helps us to keep in closer touch with the American public and helps us understand what you want and expect from us, as well as what you do not want. Dealing with the Congress more also means, in effect, that they share some responsibility for what we do. More interplay with the Congress gives us the benefit of different insights into our activities, different views of it, from people who are somewhat detached. We find their advice and counsel most helpful. The primary disadvantage is, again, the danger of leaking classified information. Congress is no better nor worse than the Executive Branch in terms of leaks. Their motives may be sometimes different, but any leak of classified information does us the same damage.

Nonetheless, the process of sharing with the Congress and gaining their advice has worked well in the three years I have been privileged to participate in it. I want to continue that relationship. Why is there then controversy over it? We are attempting to codify into law what the current practices actually are. What is happening, I'm afraid, is that, in trying to define into law what current practice is, we are establishing a degree of precision which does not now exist, and if introduced will eliminate important flexibility. This replacement of some trust with all law concentrates on two particular issues. How soon do we notify the Congress of what we are going to do, or have done, and at what level of detail?

The question of how soon is a very interesting constitutional issue. What did the Founding Fathers intend when they created a separation of powers? An editorial in a leading newspaper recently complained that if the Congress was not informed of intelligence community actions in advance of their implementation, the President would be deprived of Congressional consultation. Well, consultation has a nice voluntary ring to it, but when consultation is prescribed by law it is not really consultation it is partnership. And in effect, it gives the Congress a veto over a President's initiatives. If a group - even a small group - knows about a secret activity and anyone in that group disapproves of that activity, the easiest way to stop it is to leak it. Too many individual vetoes like that - and there always seems to be somebody who doesn't want to do anything - can drive us to no action at all.

It seems to me the Founding Fathers intended that the Congress exercise its will over the President by the power of the purse strings and by the power to pass statutes that authorize certain things and limit others. If the Congress were to pre-judge every Presidential action in the field of intelligence, it would rob the President of any opportunity to take necessary policy initiatives, to lead. Instead, he would become a partner or perhaps a puppet of the Congress.

With respect to the amount of detail we must share with the Congress, our concern is less with the actual sharing than with perception of others outside our own country of how much we are sharing - individuals who understand neither the importance nor the purpose of bringing a Congress into the intelligence process. Agents of ours overseas and intelligence services with whom we work know that their effectiveness, even their well being, depends on secrecy. They also know that the viability of a politician, a Congressman, depends to a large extent on public relations. We cannot easily persuade them that if they deal with us, and we subsequently share that information in intimate detail with the Congress, that it can be kept private. That their equities, maybe their lives, will be protected.

In practice, the committees of Congress, in my three years of association with them, have exercised extraordinarily good judgment here and have not pressed us for a level of detail that was unnecessary. To my knowledge, they have not complained for lack of adequate information to do effective oversight. There may have been differences between us in specific instances, but in every case we have resolved them amicably and to their satisfaction. We just cannot be strapped in by a lawyer dotting an "i" or crossing a "t" too precisely here if at the same time we want the best intelligence.

Finally, this new environment of greater openness has changed our relationship with the Fourth Estate and with the American public. Intelligence services are accustomed to very little publicity. Today, we get a lot, and it makes a real difference. Better public relations is one thing. We need and seek some of that. After all, as the result of the investigations of '75 and '76, the American public has rightly questioned whether they need us and if they do, then how much and why. No important public institution in this country can thrive over a period of time unless it has the support of the American public. We have tried in recent years to be more open with you. But, we have been more open in terms of adducing our product when it can be declassified. Through our analyses and our studies we have hoped to provide the public some the return for their investment in us. We are scrupulous in not talking about our sources or our methods for the same reasons every newspaperman refuses to reveal his sources. He hopes to protect their confidence and perhaps use them again. We also protect information which is important to our policy makers either because they have it exclusively, or because it will be useful only if no one suspects they have it. Preventing leaks is the most serious challenge today in the intelligence profession.

We are asking the Congress to help us do this in three areas. The Hughes-Ryan Amendment, enacted in 1974 requires that anytime we are to undertake covert action, we must notify eight committees of the Congress. That could be several hundred people when you count the Congressional staffs. A covert action revealed

to that many people may not deserve the title, covert. We are asking to reduce that notification to the two committees that exercise oversight over us and on which are represented members of the other six committees. That way there would still be knowledge of covert actions in those other committees when needed.

We are also asking for partial relief from the Freedom of Information Act, by which you, the Russian Embassy, or anybody else can ask us for information from our files. We must respond to all these requests within ten days. It is an onerous problem, but particularly with respect again to the perceptions of foreign liaison services and foreign agents. It is difficult to persuade someone to risk his life for you if he has heard there is a law that may require me to reveal his name in public. We are very willing to provide you any information we may have on you, and to respond to inquiries about our product. We feel it is extremely dangerous to require us to search highly sensitive operational files in response to FOIA. Virtually no information from these files is releasable even now, but the perception that it may be inadvertently released is extremely harmful.

Lastly, we are asking for legislation to let us prosecute people who traitorously disclose the names of our officers and agents around the world - people like Philip Agee. This is a real problem for us. What Mr. Agee and people of his ilk are doing, with acknowledged deliberateness, is to try to undermine this organization which you pay for with your tax dollars, and which the Congress has authorized. We must have some legislative way of curtailing people who are deliberately trying to thwart the will of the people and of the Congress by attempting to destroy an essential activity of the United States of America.

Let me note to you that none of these three relief measures I have just described constitute any great relaxation or setting loose of the Central Intelligence Agency. They are simply moves toward restoring a modicum of essential secrecy.

Yes, secrecy, any secrecy will always seem an anachronism in America's open society. And, covert action will always conflict with the American tradition of fair play. So, the country must decide if it needs an intelligence activity. I personally believe it clearly does. If so, carping at a reasonable level of secrecy and reasonable freedom to use covert action against hostile countries is unproductive and can be destructive. We, in the intelligence profession, are well aware of the nation's standards and your quite reasonable concern in these areas. We have no intention of violating the trust that has been given to us to carry out these delicate undertakings. We have no intention of undermining the values of the society that we are here to defend. And, we do not ask simply to be trusted. We strongly endorse continuing the oversight process both in the Executive and Legislative Branches.

Today we are poised at a balance point with three years of successful experience behind us. We do not believe that we can tip that balance any further in the direction of loosening our controls over secrecy and still be able to function effectively as a secret intelligence service. We do not ask to be unshackled. We ask to be able to continue as we have over the past three years. I know of no accusation of illegality, impropriety, or abuse, nor any cause for such an accusation. I know of no inference that the oversight process has not been thorough or effective during that time.

So today we are on the verge of an exciting and important new phase in American intelligence. We are constructing a uniquely American model of intelligence tailored, to our society and our concepts of the rights and privileges of the individual, but tailored also to permit us to do what needs to be done to preserve our national security. As we go forward in this, as we carry this legislation through the Congress we need your understanding and your support. I am grateful so many of you have chosen to be us tonight. Thank you very much.